

## HALESOWEN AREA COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2007, at 6.30 p.m.  
at Howley Grange Primary School, Howley Grange Road, Halesowen

### PRESENT

Councillors Body, Burston, Crumpton, Mrs Dunn, Mrs Faulkner, Hill, Jackson, Ms Partridge, Mrs Shakespeare, Taylor, K Turner, Mrs Turner and Woodall.

### Officers

Area Liaison Officer, Assistant Director for Resources, Assistant Director Learning Disability and Mental Health, Head of Policy (Executive and Support), Group Engineer (Transportation), Principal Solicitor (Mr M Farooq), Environmental Protection Manager, Quality and Complaints Manager, Mrs M Johal and Mr P Furidze (Directorate of Law and Property)

### Also in Attendance

The Cabinet Members for Finance and Adult and Community Services  
Mr P Aston – Crime Reduction Officer  
Mr H Murray – Vale Retail  
Mr T Delaney – CENTRO

Approximately 27 members of the public were in attendance.

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1            ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

### RESOLVED

That Councillor Jackson be elected Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

Councillor Jackson thereupon took the Chair and upon doing so formally welcomed the previous Mayor of Dudley and paid tribute to the way he had conducted office during his illness. He also congratulated Councillors Burston and Ms Nicholls who had been appointed as the Deputy Mayor and the consort to the Mayor of Dudley respectively, both of whom were Members of this Committee.

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2            APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

### RESOLVED

That Councillor Mrs Faulkner be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

3                    APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors James and Ms Nicholls.

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4                    DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Personal Interests, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, were made by the following Members in respect of the matters indicated:

Councillor Burston declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 15 (Halesowen Town Centre Development) regarding reference to the Halesowen Bus Station in view of him being employed by CENTRO

Councillor Burston declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 17 (Delegated Capital Budget) regarding reference to Huntingtree Park in view of him being a Member of Friends of Huntingtree Park.\_

Councillor Mrs Turner declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 17 (Delegated Capital Budget) regarding reference to Huntingtree Park in view of her being an attendee of Friends of Huntingtree Park.\_

Councillor K Turner declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item No 17 (Delegated Capital Budget) regarding reference to Huntingtree Park in view of him being an attendee of Friends of Huntingtree Park.\_

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5                    MINUTES

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2007, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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6                    TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROTOCOL FOR AREA COMMITTEES

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted setting out the terms of reference and protocol for Area Committees.

Arising from the presentation of the report a Member referred to Appendix 1 to the report regarding determining proposals for the deployment of the delegated capital budget allocation and suggested that the allocation should be part split to each Ward for local Councillors to determine. A further amount could be allocated to determine cross Ward projects and it was felt that this would reinforce the role of local Councillors and ensure that they were fully involved. It was further stated that the capital budget allocation was not utilised enough and that it could be publicised by local surgeries and Tenants and Residents Association meetings. Another Member concurred with the comments made and further commented that other Area Committees used this method.

During the ensuing discussion other Members commented that previous years allocations had revealed an underspend each year and to allocate in the way suggested would exclude and disadvantage other Wards as they may have worthy projects. The Chairman also commented that it was important to consider worthy projects rather than geographical areas and the method currently used allowed for increased flexibility. The Cabinet Member for the Environment also commented that there were avenues to discuss the allocation with groups of people but indicated that there had not been any response.

In responding the Area Liaison Officer indicated that at a previous Committee meeting the issue had been discussed and it had been agreed that the current method be used to maintain flexibility. However, for reasons of openness and transparency he undertook to provide in future capital budget reports, a detailed analysis and information that highlighted which Wards were allocated funding and how much was spent in individual Wards.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and Appendices to the report, submitted on the terms of reference and the protocol for Area Committees, be noted.
- (2) That the Area Liaison Officer be requested to provide a breakdown on information regarding capital allocations on an individual Ward basis in future Delegated Capital Budget reports.

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#### APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the appointment of Co-opted Members to the Committee for the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

#### RESOLVED

That Co-opted Members be not appointed to the Committee in the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

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## APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the appointment of Working Groups of the Committee for the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

### RESOLVED

- (1) That the Halesowen Town Centre Consultation Exercise Working Group be re-appointed for the ensuing year, with the following terms of reference:-
  - To champion the Halesowen Town Centre Consultation Exercise
  - To agree that all consultation material be branded 'Halesowen Town Matters' to reflect the theme of 'Regeneration Matters' within the latest Council Plan
  - Receive regular progress reports from the Project Manager detailing the physical developments taking place in Halesowen Town Centre
  - Identify and resolve any constraints to project progress
  - Guide public relations and communication issues for the project
  - To report recommendations and findings to the Committee on a regular basis.
  
- (2) That the Working Group comprise the Chairman of the Committee and the following Ward Members:- Councillors James, Hill and K Turner and that nominations in respect of the Halesowen South and Cradley and Foxcote Wards be submitted to the Area Liaison Officer.

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## APPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL REPRESENTATIONS TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on the appointment of representatives of the Committee to serve on outside organisations for the 2007/08 Municipal Year.

### RESOLVED

That the following members be appointed to serve on the organisations indicated:

Beechtree and Wollescote Welfare Institute – The Ward Members for the Cradley and Foxcote Ward, namely Councillors Body, Crumpton and Ms Partridge and David Vickers (four year term from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2008).

Cradley Community Association – Councillor Crumpton  
Lutley Community Association – Councillor Burston

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PETITION

A petition was submitted by Councillor K Turner on behalf of residents requesting bus stops for Nos 9 and 139 to be repositioned outside the shops on the Queensway between the redeveloping bus station and the Church. The petition was referred to the Director of the Urban Environment for attention.

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YOUTH ISSUES

A representative from the Youth Service briefly reported on activities undertaken by young people in recent months. He indicated that young people had been successful in obtaining funding from the Youth Opportunities Fund. Various activities and functions had also been held including sports, photography and drama. He also commented that the dance room that had been paid for by the Area Committee's capital allocation budget had proved to be very successful and popular. A further brief report was also given by a young person and he indicated that the Youth Council had recently organised a "Rock Night", which had attracted a good turnout and he also indicated that a further similar event would be held on 26<sup>th</sup> July.

The Cabinet Member for Finance was in attendance and commented that her son was a Member of the United Kingdom Youth Parliament for the Dudley Borough and requested that he be given the opportunity to make a presentation to a future meeting of the Committee. He would be attempting to attend all Area Committees with a view to promoting the important work of the Youth Council.

A Member commended the police in undertaking the "Coffee in the Dark" event for young people and indicated that it had contributed to a reduction in the number of complaints about anti social behaviour in Huntingtree Park.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the verbal report regarding youth issues be noted.
  - (2) That the United Kingdom Youth Parliament representative for the Dudley Borough be invited to the next meeting of the Committee with a view to making a presentation on the work undertaken by the Youth Council.
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POLICE ISSUES

The Crime Reduction Officer was in attendance and confirmed that there were no issues to report but undertook to answer any queries that may arise during the course of the meeting.

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PUBLIC FORUM

A resident referred to a recent media article and expressed concern that it had been reported that there was a possible threat to the existence of the Council's Neighbourhood Management Unit. She stated that the Neighbourhood Management Unit were a main supporter of Caslon Primary School and it was indicated that the school and the community had not been consulted about the issue. She requested that the Committee use its influence to ensure that the support received from the Neighbourhood Management Unit was retained so that the excellent work could continue, particularly with regard to the success of the extended school and the Caslon Community Partnership.

A Member congratulated the school for work undertaken in relation to the extended school and another Member referred to a previous application made under the Delegated Capital Budget and asked that the request should be reconsidered and funding given to the Caslon Community Partnership with a view to obtaining match funding for a community garden. He further commented that the Caslon Community Partnership had contributed to a reduction in anti social behaviour and lesser police involvement.

In responding the Area Liaison Officer indicated that he was aware of an ongoing review of the Neighbourhood Management team and commented that it was a matter for the Local Strategic Partnership to consider. He further commented that he was not aware of the proposals but undertook to ensure that details were submitted to the Committee when available.

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WARD ISSUES

(a) Councillor Body

Referred to Heritage Boards, which had been erected in villages in Wales explaining the history of the area. He suggested that similar boards should be provided in various areas of the Borough, including his own Ward and believed the cost could be met from the delegated capital budget and sponsorship from local businesses.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment supported the suggestion and commented that Halesowen North, which boasted a rich history, would be another area where the boards should be provided. She further commented that young people could benefit from the initiative and suggested that the remains of last years capital budget could be utilised.

In responding the Area Liaison Officer stated that he had previously been approached about the project and indicated that it was worthy of being pursued. However, he indicated that there was a need to ensure that the provision of such boards was consistent with existing Council policies and undertook to investigate the matter further.

(b) Councillor Mrs Turner

Referred to Thornhill Road and Hambleton Road and indicated that repairs had still not been carried out and queried when the roads would be scheduled for completion.

(c) Councillor Crumpton

Paid tribute to the Tanhouse Tenants and Residents Association, the ongoing work of the Youth Club and that a fun day was being arranged to generate interest.

(d) Councillor K Turner

(i) Referred to the No Smoking Ban and complained that litterbins in Dudley had been replaced with metal bins last year but in the last few weeks they had been replaced by plastic bins. He further commented that Birmingham had metal bins with a part to it that allowed for the stubbing of cigarettes and indicated that they were more suitable as people did not have to stamp on cigarette stubs and leave them on the floor.

(ii) Referred to green wheelie bins that had been imported from France and indicated that even though they were cheaper they were not of sufficient quality. He referred to a specific incident whereby the wheels had fallen off the bin and Officers had to replace them and he queried the overall cost. He also referred to the recent press coverage relating to asylum seekers who had gained entry to the country in the vehicle transporting the bins from France.

- (iii) Reported that he had been a representative for Ground Work Black Country and had supported the Cradley Town Football Club and indicated that a vast amount of effort had been put in to the community grounds and gardens. He queried whether the Cabinet Member for the Environment would support and put in the same effort to ensure that funding was accessed for the continued work.

In responding the Cabinet Member for the Environment referred to the litterbins and indicated that they were not under her jurisdiction and that she only dealt with the enforcement side. However, she undertook to refer the matter to the Cabinet Member for Transportation. Regarding the asylum seekers she reported that they were taken away and that it was a police matter. In response to the loss of wheels, the Cabinet Member for the Environment indicated that she was not aware of any complaints but stated that the wheels may not have been attached properly. With regard to the costs for bins it was indicated that the tendering process had to be followed and that depending on the values the contract had to be tendered locally, nationally or European wide. She further stated that people were thrilled with the bins and the fortnightly collection. As far as the representative for Ground Work Black Country she indicated that she had not previously served as a representative.

- (g) Councillor Ms Partridge

Indicated that the permit had been issued for Fish 4 Dogs Ltd, and thanked the Committee for its support in the matter but referred to the numerous complaints and requested that continued support be given to enforcing the conditions of the permit.

In responding the Environmental Protection Manager reported that the issuing of the permit was almost complete and assured the meeting that the conditions would be enforced.

The Cabinet Member for the Environment commented that she had signed the decision sheet but the delay had been due to the permit being redrafted to include various conditions following consultation with the Ward Councillors.

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## HALESOWEN TOWN CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on progress made with regard to physical developments taking place within Halesowen Town Centre together with a joint presentation by Vale Retail, Centro/WMPTA, the Police and Council Officers to outline progress.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) introduced the report and asked that representatives from Vale Retail, Centro and the Police briefly update the Committee on the current position. During the course of the presentation individual updates were given on the position regarding the development and it was indicated the works were on schedule and that there were no concerns with regard to anti social behaviour.

The Group Engineer (Transportation) then gave an update on car park closures and reported that the one-way system at Queensway had worked well. He indicated that following the closure of car parks the Pool Road car park now seemed to be more popular but stated that there had not been many complaints regarding car park spaces but indicated that the situation would continue to be monitored.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) concluded in saying that the development was being approached in a unified manner and that partnership working was vital and indicated that feedback to date had been very positive.

A member of the public expressed concern that there were no concessions for parking for residents of Halesowen and also indicated that there were no attempts being made to encourage shoppers and stated that it was impacting on trade. He also referred to there not being any free parking and further stated that the cost for parking had increased. He also referred to the difficulties being experienced by the elderly in getting to Pool Road and commented that the suggestion by Age Concern to provide additional bus services had not been considered. A Member concurred with the comments made and further indicated that the positioning of the new No 9 bus stop attracted problems because when people got off the bus there was no appropriate footpath for people to access Pool Road and it was particularly difficult for people with wheelchairs and pushchairs.

In responding the Group Engineer (Transportation) reported that he was aware of the suggestion from Age Concern but stated that it would be difficult to provide a bus service in the location requested, as there were serious safety concerns. However, he reported that discussions were being held to explore other avenues such as a Shop Mobility Scheme similar to that being operated at the Merry Hill Shopping Centre. With regard to the increased car parking costs, the Group Engineer (Transportation) acknowledged that it had come at a difficult time but stated that any proposals to reduce charges would have to recognise the problems resulting from having only limited remaining parking stock. However, he indicated that measures were being put in place to ease the situation such as a temporary Traffic Regulation Order where limited on street parking traffic had been increased to forty-five minutes, which would allow extra time for shoppers. Meetings were also being held with traders to discuss impact on trade and possible mitigation any other issues that may possibly arise during the works. With regard to access to Pool Road, the Group Engineer (Transportation) undertook to speak to the relevant Officer with a view to discussing any measures that could be taken.

During the ensuing discussion Members made several comments including the bleeder on the Summerhill pedestrian crossing needing attention, concerns at the 20 mph limit on Queensway and how it was being enforced, provision for public toilets and that members of the public should be invited to meetings of the Working Group.

The Head of Policy (Executive and Support) undertook to investigate the provision of public toilets in the context of the Council's existing policies and whether any policy applied and to report direct to the Member concerned.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and presentation on the progress and development in Halesowen Town Centre, be noted.
- (2) That the Head of Policy (Executive and Support) be requested to investigate the provision of public toilets and whether there were any applicable policies and to report direct to the Member concerned.

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted informing the Committee of the written responses made to questions asked at the previous meeting.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report now submitted, be noted.
  - (2) That the Cabinet Member for Transportation be recommended to refuse the application to purchase land at the rear of 28-54 Windmill Hill, Halesowen as it would have a detrimental effect on redevelopment proposals for Windmill Hill.
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### DELEGATED CAPITAL BUDGET

A report of the Area Liaison Officer was submitted on requests for funding from the Delegated Capital Budget.

With regard to paragraph 7(b) of the report, a Member commented that Huntingtree Park now had unusable fields due to heavy rain and indicated that discussions were being held to develop the works. He requested that agreement be given, in principle, to enable match funding to be pursued.

#### RESOLVED

- (1) That a total amount of £68,000 being available for allocation in 2007/08, be noted.
- (2) That the Area Liaison Officer, in consultation with the Chairman and a representative from the Opposition Group, be authorised to consider and agree, where appropriate, requests for funding from community and voluntary groups for small grants, and that the criteria against which all bids/allocations should be considered as set out in Appendix A to the report submitted.
- (3) That the Area Liaison Officer be authorised to take appropriate action to promote the availability of funding for 2007/08, as indicated in paragraph 6 of the report now submitted.
- (4) That the action of the Area Liaison Officer in not supporting the request from Halesowen Athletics and Cycling Club – Tennis Section for funding to replace fencing on the grounds of health and safety, because they have significant reserves and a healthy net surplus, be noted.
- (5) That the position on the request from Friends of Huntingtree Park, for support towards the provision of a multi-use games area and the action of the Area Liaison Officer in deferring the decision pending completion of further work, be noted.

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APPLICATIONS IN RESPECT OF LAND AND PROPERTY OWNED BY THE COUNCIL

A report of the Director of Law and Property was submitted on a request relating to land and property controlled by the Council.

RESOLVED

That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to declare the site at Beechfield Close, Halesowen, as shown hatched on the plan attached to the report, submitted, surplus to requirements for sale on the open market upon terms and conditions to be negotiated and agreed by the Director of Law and Property.

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PROGRESS OF ELECTED MEMBER VISITS TO ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE ESTABLISHMENTS 2006/07

A joint report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services and the Director of Children's Services was submitted on the progress of visits to Adult and Children's social care establishments undertaken by Members during 2006/07, actions taken in response to Member visits and on nominations for Members to carry out visits to Social Care establishments during 2007/08.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the information contained in the report, and appendices to the report, submitted be noted.
- (2) That Members be requested to submit nominations for the 2007/08 Municipal Year direct to the Area Liaison Officer.

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DUDLEY LOCAL IMPROVEMENT FINANCE TRUST (LIFT)

A report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was submitted on progress on the LIFT Scheme in Colley Gate, which was currently at an early stage of development.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted, on work being done to develop a new facility in Colley Gate that would provide a range of primary care services within a purpose-built facility, be noted.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS REGARDING CRADLEY HIGH SCHOOL

A report of the Director of Children's Services was submitted detailing answers to questions about Cradley High School raised by Members at the previous meeting of the Committee.

Arising from the presentation of the report and in response to a query from a member of the public, the Assistant Director for Resources stated that a meeting would be held with parents of Year 10 pupils but indicated that this could only happen when all information was available and known. He reported that there would be a core of experienced staff to teach next years Year 11 children and further commented that discussions were being held with staff that had already left with a view to them returning to cover GCSE exams.

A Member commented that the details in the report now submitted were not consistent with the information provided to the Schools Organisation Committee when the decision to close Cradley High School was made. It was suggested that the Schools Organisation Committee had been misled.

In responding the Assistant Director for Resources indicated that the figures stated in the report now submitted were what was available at the time of writing and further reported that accurate figures were to be submitted to the Schools Forum shortly. He gave a breakdown in figures and indicated that it was close to the figure that had been stated to the School Organisation Committee. He further pointed out that the Chair of Governors of the School was in attendance at the meeting of the Schools Organisation Committee and did not dispute the figure given.

**RESOLVED**

That the information contained in the report now submitted in respect of answers to questions raised at the previous meeting of the Committee regarding Cradley High School, be noted.

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HIGHWAYS MINOR WORKS CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2007/2008

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the proposed programmes of work for Local Safety Schemes, Pedestrian Crossings and Safer Routes to School within the Halesowen Area for the 2007/2008 financial year.

**RESOLVED**

That support be given to the proposed Local Safety Schemes, Pedestrian Crossing and Safer Routes to School initiatives as outlined in Appendices A, B and C respectively of the report submitted.

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SELECT COMMITTEE PUBLICITY

As a way of giving additional publicity to meetings of the Council's Select Committees, details of Select Committee meetings had been included on the agendas of meetings of Area Committees.

The information given in respect of publicity for future meetings of Select Committees was noted.

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm.

CHAIRMAN